

Jeremiah 51:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end,

Analysis

One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end—This verse captures the chaos and confusion of Babylon's fall with cinematic vividness. The word "post" (rats, רָץ) means runner or courier—ancient equivalent of emergency messengers. The image of messengers running toward each other from different parts of the city, each bearing news of the same disaster, emphasizes Babylon's enormous size and the conquest's speed.

"His city is taken at one end" (nikhedah iro mikkatseh, נִלְכְּדָה עִירוֹ מִקְצֵה) is prophetically precise. Babylon was so large (ancient sources describe walls 14 miles in circumference) that one section could fall while other sections remained unaware. The use of lakad (לָקַד, "taken/captured") in the passive voice emphasizes the fait accompli—by the time messengers reach the king, conquest is already complete, rendering resistance futile.

This verse demonstrates prophetic omniscience. Jeremiah, writing decades before 539 BCE, couldn't naturally know Babylon would fall through such confusion. The detail validates divine inspiration—God knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). It also shows divine irony: Babylon, which perfected courier systems for imperial communication, would learn of its own fall through frantic messengers bearing catastrophic news.

Historical Context

Daniel 5 provides inspired commentary on this verse's fulfillment. During Belshazzar's feast, Babylon fell to Persian forces who entered through the Euphrates riverbed after diverting the river. Herodotus and Xenophon describe how the city's size meant outlying districts fell while the center continued feasting. When messengers finally reached Belshazzar with news, he was killed that night (Daniel 5:30).

The Nabonidus Chronicle states: "The army of Cyrus entered Babylon without battle." The Cyrus Cylinder describes entering Babylon peacefully. The combination of sources confirms the prophecy: conquest occurred with such speed and minimal resistance that messengers running from different city sections met each other bearing the same shocking news. Archaeological evidence of Babylon's massive size (excavations reveal the city's enormous scale) confirms how one end could be taken while the king at the center remained unaware until runners arrived.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does the image of confused messengers illustrate the helplessness of human power before divine judgment?
2. What does Babylon's fall during a feast (Daniel 5) teach about false security and complacency?
3. How should believers maintain spiritual vigilance knowing judgment can arrive suddenly when least expected?

Interlinear Text

יָרַ וַיָּ	לִקְרַב אֶת	יָרַ וַיָּ	יָרַ וַיָּ	לְהַגִּיד	לִקְרַב אֶת
One post	to meet	One post	One post	and one messenger	to meet
H7323	H7125	H7323	H7323	H5046	H7125
לְהַגִּיד	לְהַגִּיד	לְמֶלֶךְ	בָּבֶל	כִּי	נִלְכְּדָה
and one messenger	and one messenger	the king	of Babylon	H3588	is taken
H5046	H5046	H4428	H894		H3920
עִיר וְ	מִקְצֵהָ:				
that his city	at one end				
H5892	H7097				

Additional Cross-References

2 Chronicles 30:6 (Kingdom): So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.